

Nebraska Adult Education
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.....**Message from Carol Grell**

First I want to say to say “hello” to all of you as I continue in my relatively new position as Consultant in Adult Education. I have been here since July 1, 2004 and still have lots to learn. I know I met a great many of you at the ABE Annual Conference in Kearney in October (my arrow is at the doorway of my office, so you can find me if you come to our office) but I know there are many others who were not in attendance.

Just a little about me. Personally - I have a husband, two daughters, one son-in-law and two grandsons – at this time. My younger daughter became engaged at Thanksgiving (is there some message there? She is 27.) Professionally – I have a bachelor’s degree and certification in elementary education and taught at that level. While my daughters were growing up, I taught ABE for SCC-Lincoln and during that time earned my master’s degree in adult education.

After completion of my master’s degree I worked at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as an academic advisor.

I have been affiliated with education all my professional life and know that is where my interest lies. I feel I have come full-circle in returning to adult education in this position. I do find the field has changed noticeably – with changes that are beneficial to students, teachers and programs. It is much more formal, there is more accountability on the part of teachers and students, the teaching materials are much better, and technology has changed everything. It is an exciting time and I am sure changes will continue into the future, just as sure as the weather will change!

I look forward to reconnecting with you as Vicki and I visit programs and as we attend meetings together throughout the year. Please know that I am here to help you whenever and however I can, so give me a call. If I don’t know the answer, I will find the person who does. I am learning everyday – just like your students!

Here’s hoping the remainder of the year is good for you with positive growth and learning within all your classrooms and programs!

Dyslexia and ADD/ADHD

These are terms we often hear relating to learning disabilities. Here are some suggestions of things you might look for to begin to determine if the student could perhaps have problems with either of these. Remember that no one has all these symptoms and no two people are exactly alike. You will want to look for a “group” of symptoms and often these problems reveal a discrepancy between what you think the student’s abilities are and how the student actually performs academically. These students need lots of encouragement!

These are presented in the “Bright Solutions for Dyslexia and ADD/ADHD” information. You can find more information at their website: BrightSolutions.US. Signs you might look for:

Dyslexia

- Very bad spelling and can’t seem to get it
- Slow reader and doesn’t really understand what had been read
- Writes some letters and/or numbers backwards
- Trouble learning multiplication facts
- Can’t sound out words
- Written work not at the same level as spoken
- Confuses left and right and reverses b & d
- Had lots of ear infections as a child

ADD/ADHD

- Often confused by oral instructions
- Extremely messy room
- Trouble going to sleep; can’t wake
- Highly distractable
- Trouble following through (turning in work)
- Trouble focusing on one task for a long time
- Makes lots of careless errors

Goodbye and Hello in ABE

Many of you already may know that we have had some changes of ABE Directors across the state. Terry Patterson began as the Director of the Literacy Center for the Midlands in Omaha last summer. Jim Holen, Southeast Community College—Lincoln, retired the end of 2004. His position has been filled with Babette Dickinson, who is now taking the reins in ABE for both the Lincoln and Beatrice campuses of SCC. Jane Zatechka, also from Southeast Community College—Lincoln, retired in January and has been replaced by Linda Horton. Bill Pierson, Northeast Community College, left for the west coast, Oregon, to work in ABE there. Dan Jones took over that position the first of the year. We also have a new ABE Director in Blair, LeRoy Wigdahl and in Seward, Jasmine Blecha.

Welcome to all of you and we wish you the very best as you assume your responsibilities in ABE.

A Baker's Dozen for Successful Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Submitted by Lorraine Jensby, ABE Volunteer Coordinator, Southeast Community College—Beatrice

“Let others feel the smile in your voice,” was one tip Jo Fredell Higgins of Waubensee Community College, Aurora, Illinois campus, shared with those who attended her workshop on volunteer recruitment and retention at the 2004 COABE conference held in Columbus, Ohio, in April.

Higgins began working with volunteers in the adult education/adult literacy program at Waubensee Community College 18 years ago. During her tenure she has taken the volunteer program from 42 volunteers to over 300 active volunteers each of the past 10 years. Volunteers in her program have won local, state and national awards. How did she accomplish this? How can you do the same thing with your program?

Higgins shared a “Baker’s Dozen,” 13 tips, to help others develop successful adult education volunteer programs.

Step One: Look at each person you meet as a prospective volunteer! Interact with as many people as you can to attract not only volunteers, but students and financial assistance for your program. The more frequently you send out your message, the better your chances will be to maintain and increase your volunteer base.

Step Two: Understand that delegation is an art. If we give a person responsibility, we must define the perimeters of the job, give instruction and

then let them teach the adult students as they see fit.

Step Three: Be honest about the position. Tell them up front about the scope of the tutoring, the amount of time weekly that is expected so that expectations are discussed going in. Higgins sets a one hour a week, one year time commitment to the project, but maintains flexibility in working with volunteers.

Step Four: Match volunteers with the kind of volunteer experience they want. Higgins said if her volunteer wants a one-to-one student on Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m., that is what she tries to give them. If they prefer an older student or a younger student, male or female, try to match volunteers with their preferences. A happily placed volunteer will stay with your program much longer.

Step Five: Pay as much attention to each volunteer as you can. Send them birthday cards, call to ask how the match is going, make contact with them when they are ill or have illness or death in their families. The more attention you pay to each and every volunteer, the longer they will stay with you. Establish a relationship with them on an individual basis...it counts.

Step Six: Communication is vital. Do it in person, by phone, e-mail, letter, card, newsletters...however! Volunteers want to be recognized and their efforts noted. Higgins makes regular “Sunshine Calls” to see how

things are going. She also enlists volunteers to help her with registration, clerical work and to represent their program at job fairs and volunteer recruitment fairs.

“Involve volunteers in more than just tutoring to help build your program,” Higgins said. “Aurora does not have a monopoly on good people. We have made them exceptional people by providing an arena where they can succeed and we tell them they are appreciated. Your locale can also garner the talents of fine people if you are willing to give it the time and attention it takes.”

Step Seven: Set goals. And if you want to be successful, you are going to have to do the work necessary to achieve those goals.

“When I am asked what I attribute my success to, I respond with ‘a lot of hard work by many people,’” said Higgins. She said a quality volunteer program takes determination and work and retaining the volunteers already with your program takes attention to detail and remembering them in many small ways.

Step Eight: Be sensitive to the personal wishes and needs of volunteers. Work with the tutor to find a satisfactory situation. If they request a specific location, time, day, student, work load...give it to them. If they are not happy with the classroom, suggest a one-to-one student. If they need to

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A Baker's Dozen for Successful Volunteer Recruitment and Retention..Continued

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take a leave of absence, let them know there will be work for them when they are ready to return...let them know they are needed!

Step Nine: Listen. Listen. Listen. Be open and available when either volunteers or students want to talk. "You will retain your volunteers and the students will feel that they have been heard and that someone cares," Higgins said.

Step Ten: Hold reunions and/or workshops. If your program does group volunteer training sessions, hold a reunion six weeks after the training. This allows new volunteers to share beginning stories of their experiences with one another and to establish ties to the organization. Problems can be resolved and tutors can share ideas, stories, and what's working or not working for them. If you don't do group volunteer training, be sure to invite your volunteers to workshops and in-

services planned for teachers. Again, the more attention you pay to your volunteers, the more committed they will become.

Step Eleven: Be honest. When training new volunteers, be sure to answer their questions with clarity and honesty. Let the volunteers know you are available to answer their questions anytime because that is what you are here for.

"If a beginning tutor realizes the reading process is long and that there will be set-backs as the student makes progress, the volunteer will be able to handle it with aplomb rather than feel it is a personal thing," Higgins said.

Step Twelve: Recognition is what this process is all about. Higgins said recognizing volunteers should be an integral part of how you operate. Provide them with support and encouragement to keep them with your program. Nominate your volunteers for

awards on the local, state or national level. Create a "Wall of Recognition" with photos of your volunteers and students.

Step Thirteen: You have to want to be successful. You have to want to keep your volunteers year after year. You have to demonstrate a caring attitude. And you have to spend the time to recruit new volunteers to counterbalance those who leave your program.

Higgins said the most important thing to remember is that the world's best recruiters for your program are satisfied volunteers. Such volunteers become "informal recruiters" by telling others how pleased they are with your agency and the meaningful work they are doing.

"Train your volunteers to keep their eyes open for people who express an interest in becoming involved," Higgins said. "Have them report names to you for follow-up."

Inquire Within: Reflective Practice in Teaching

COABE Session 2004—Submitted by Lisa Erickson—ABE Instructor, Omaha Public Schools

Valley Peters, director of the Teton Literacy Program in Jackson, Wyoming, introduced us to the idea of "reflective practice." Essentially, reflective practice is a formal way of journaling your experiences in the classroom, analyzing what's taking place, and then formulating a plan of action based on that analysis.

While we all, hopefully, reflect upon whether a particular lesson was successful or not, or why a certain student was or was not engaged in an activity, "reflective practice" is a deliberate method of describing, analyzing and taking action. It can help clarify our thinking and promote improved teaching strategies.

Step one is to write about your observations in the classroom during a particular lesson or portion of the class. Be non-judgmental; write what

you saw (students' actions) and heard (students' comments). Next, analyze what happened and why. Is a student not participating because he is afraid of failing, or does he lack the skills to take part? Does he have a personal problem with someone else in the class? Do your own emotions play a role? Imagine you're an observer watching a videotape of your class. What would the observer say? Describe in writing several explanations for what went wrong (or right).

Finally, "take intelligent action." Based on your objective observations, and your thoughtful analysis, develop a plan, in writing. This might involve making a change in your approach to a lesson, a change in your expectations of student performance, or possibly asking a colleague for advice. You might conclude that an activity was very successful, and after

analyzing why, your "intelligent action" might be to do similar activities.

Reflective practice" is for teachers who want to challenge themselves, to move out of their comfort zones, and to take an honest look at their teaching.

It's easy to do things the same way year after year, but is it the best way for today's students? Having a written journal with specific details provides clarity and "concreteness. A written plan of action is more likely to be carried out than is a mental note.

Objective observation, careful analysis, and decisive action "helps us put the pieces together to become more effective educators." (Read more about it on the Internet; search on "reflective practice.")

COABE CONFERENCE IS Multi-Good

Submitted by Wendell Kuhlman—ABE Instructor, Nebraska Corrections Education Connection

Teaching (any time, any place, any students) gives dubious rewards at best. Monetary compensation is nearly always less than you could earn in private business with equal training and effort; facilities, equipment, and materials are seldom if ever what you would really like them to be; and students seem to take every opportunity to miss class and always have dozens of excuses (uh...sorry, REASONS) why their homework is not finished.

Measuring real progress with those students sometimes feels like an impossibility. That's just one of many reasons why it's so easy to second-guess yourself and your methods, wondering if you are really doing the job you should be doing with your students. Teaching is also a lonely world—once you go into the classroom, you are alone with those students. And all of these ills seem worse (to me) because I now teach in a prison. The very setting is depressing! Is it any wonder that we all feel the need to "escape" occasionally...to get into a situation where our bucket is be-

ing filled instead of being constantly drained? I know I think that way. And all of the above "moanings" were greatly alleviated by the COABE Conference in Columbus on April 24-28, 2004. It was a blessing!

I get a boost from our state ABE conference in Kearney each year. Being with 300 plus people who share similar circumstances, who voice similar complaints/concerns, who struggle with similar feelings, who are eager to brainstorm and share solutions and small triumphs—that really helps! There is an energy transformation in that setting that is unexplainable, but very real. I always return from Kearney with more enthusiasm for my chosen profession than I had before.

Now multiply that synergy by 4 or 5 and you have the national COABE conference. The *life* of the conference was palpable! Participants, presenters, and conference leaders were unanimously upbeat. The topics of the concurrent sessions contained sufficient variety to allow

everyone to easily find something interesting and informative in his/her area of ABE/ESL/GED. But the primary benefits were the zest and the rampant smiles. I had never joined COABE before...but I did now.

As kind of a side note—We don't truly appreciate the quality of the state conference we have in Nebraska each year. The presentations at COABE were good, but I've certainly attended sessions in Kearney that were at least their equal. The major (only) thing that made Columbus more energizing than Kearney is magnitude. Our state leaders do a superlative job of putting on a state conference each year...and the presenters in Nebraska take a back seat to no one.

I'd strongly recommend that each of you attend the Kearney conference this year...and arrange to have your name drawn to attend COABE in 2006. Or try hard to finagle a method of getting there on your own. It's an uplifting experience.

Plan Now To Attend the 2005 Annual Adult Basic Education Conference!

Please set aside the dates of October 13 and 14, 2005 to attend the ABE Conference in Kearney, Nebraska.

We always look forward to seeing you, catching up and providing you with sessions to help you while you are teaching your groups of students.



What Do You Think About Language?

Submitted by Susan Kash-Brown—ESL Program, Southeast Community College, Lincoln

Language. What is it and what are your attitudes about it? Hmm. “My attitudes about language?” you ask. What a silly question. Or, is it? This is the #1 question that Dr. Karen Haslett from the Department of Anthropology at University of Iowa asked us during a thought-provoking session at the 2004 Iowa Culture and Language Conference entitled “Best Practices or Best Thoughts?”

Our first area of inquiry had to do with how we each think about or view language. The discussions focused on the shift in the purpose of language from language as a “naming device” to recognizing the multifunctionality of language.

Dr. Haslett identified six purposes (or functions) of language:

- **Referential:** We use language to convey information for its own sake. This includes the dictionary definition of words. This is where we talk about language as a “naming device.”
- **Emotive:** We use language to convey an emotion, attitude, opinion, etc. Examples of the emotive use of language are

things like “Brrr,” “Ouch!” and “You’re not wearing that to the party, are you?!?”

- **Directive:** We use language to try to get someone to do something without stating the hidden intention of our statement, such as: “It’s hot in here,” “Are you hungry? I am.”
- **Contact:** We use language to create an “in” group. This can be seen with younger generations who want to distinguish themselves from the “old-fogey” generations. One very recent and technology-based use of language is the text-messaging phenomenon.
- **Poetic:** This is the use of language for creative purposes such as songs, literature and poetry.
- **Metalinguistic:** This is when we use language to talk about talking.

Another aspect of language, especially in the Western tradition, is how we take intangible concepts and turn them into concrete objects. One

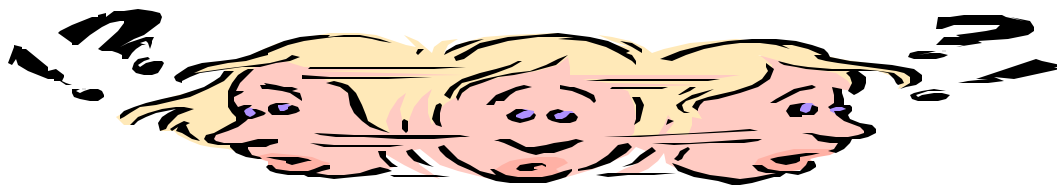
example that really demonstrates this is to think about how we talk about the concept of time.” Here are a few examples that we came up with and I’m sure you can think of others.

TIME

- Time flies.
- Time stands still.
- It’s about time!
- Lose/save/waste/kill time.
- Timeline.
- Don’t have time.

Other concepts that the group thought of included ‘love,’ ‘idea’ and ‘see’ (meaning to understand). I know that over the years I have received email messages that have listed a few of the frustrating words, concepts, ideas, structures, etc. of the English language.

Those always give me pause to reflect on the challenges that face our students as they work their way through this maze called English. This presentation was a time for us to think about how we think about and use language.



Interest Information Inventory—See following two pages

Shared by Brigitta Post—ABE Instructor, McCook Community College

Iam pleased to share a resource with you that might enable you to really get to know your students right away — perhaps even better than you do now. I know you all get to know your students, but sometimes it takes a while to know how they feel about school, favorite subjects, reading materials, talents, etc.

Note from Carol Grell: Feel free to use this with your students. Brigitta was very willing to share and that’s what collaboration in teaching and learning is all about.

Interest Information Inventory

NAME _____

DATE _____

1. Have you ever enrolled in Adult Basic Education class? ____Yes ____No
If "yes," where?
2. What is a long-term goal that you have?
3. What is a short-term goal that you have?
4. Do you have concerns about starting Adult Ed classes? ____Yes ____No
If "Yes," What are your concerns?

1. Do you have a family? ____Yes ____No
If "Yes," are they supportive of your participation in this program and of your goals? ____Yes ____No
2. Do you think you are a good listener? ____Yes ____No Do you hear easily? ____Yes ____No
3. Do you like to take notes? ____Yes ____No
4. (Please check one) You enjoy working: Alone In small groups In large groups?
Why?

1. What do you like to do in your free time?

Do you like to read? ____Yes ____No If yes, how often do you read?

Do you remember what you read? ____Yes ____No

What do you like to read (check all that apply):
____Newspapers ____Sports ____Romance ____Short Stories ____Poetry ____Manuals
____Novels ____Mystery ____Children's stories ____Comics ____Magazines ____Bible
____"How-to" Books ____Other _____
2. What parts of school did you enjoy when you attended school? _____

Why?

Please check one: My grades were: ____Above average ____Average ____Below average

My attendance was: ____Good ____Average ____Poor

Describe your experience in school.

What about school was difficult for you?

Why?

Interest Information Inventory, *Continued*

3. My family thought school was ___Important ___Not very important ___A waste of time ___Neutral

I stopped school because: _____

The highest grade I completed was: _____

I have these talents:

___Art	___Creative (crafts)	___Work with my hands (ex. mechanical)
___Music	___Photography	___Drama
___Organized	___Writing	___Other _____

1. Please complete these statements:

After completing this class, I plan to:

In the future, I see myself working as:

To accomplish this, I would need these skills:

2. Write at least two positive sentences about yourself.
3. Do you already know a student currently attending this program? ___Yes ___No
4. What kind of assistance would you like from this program?
5. How can we best help you?
6. How much interaction do you want from us?

Please feel free to continue to let us know what you need or how we can best help you!